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ABSTRACT

After introducing the problem of unsafe, dirty public school restrooms, this publication describes Project CLEAN (Citizens, Learners, and Educators Against Neglect), an effort to improve the safety, cleanliness, and hygiene of student restrooms in public schools. The Project builds a five-step, school-by-school communication process that includes: (1) establishing a working relationship with the principal and conducting a site visit; (2) taking a checklist inventory of restroom conditions; (3) facilitating student and adult discussion in order to identify solutions to restroom problems; (4) developing an individualized, written restroom improvement plan for each school; and (5) helping a school team implement its plan to ensure ongoing improvements in student restrooms. (EV)

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Project CLEAN: Safe, Sanitary School Restrooms

Tom Keating

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Tom Keating

Tom Keating founded Project CLEAN in 1996 after almost 30 years in the education arena. He served as a school board member, governmental liaison, college instructor, and teacher before his current work as a self-employed educator. A graduate of Middlebury College, a former student at St. Meinrad School of Theology, and a recipient of a Ford Foundation program for educational leadership, he completed his Ph.D. at Claremont Graduate School in education policy and politics.

Keating's writings include publications for the National School Boards Association, journals, newspapers, and a book, *Saturday School: How One Town Kept Out "The Jewish" 1902-1932* (Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 1999). He is a frequent presenter at the Chautauqua Institution and with the Phi Delta Kappa author-seminar lecture program. His love of penguins takes him to natural habitats around the world and to classrooms, where he has shared his adventures with children since 1987.

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Series Editor, Donovan R. Walling

Project CLEAN: Safe, Sanitary School Restrooms

by
Tom Keating

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Introduction

In the late 1980s in Decatur, Georgia, six miles east of Atlanta, three students — Jeffrey and Ty, a junior and a freshman at Decatur High, and Stephanie, an eighth-grader at Carl E. Renfroe Middle School — complained to parents, teachers, friends, and administrators about the restrooms in their public schools.

Jeffrey would use only the nurse's private restroom because, in the boys' restroom, none of the stalls had doors. Ty never relieved himself at school. He held it in all day. Every afternoon when he got to his home across the street from our house, he raced upstairs to his bathroom. Stephanie's requests for sanitary product dispensers and receptacles in her middle school went unanswered.

Three students make a very small sample, yet the experiences of our neighbor and our own two children sparked my interest in the condition of public school restrooms. Our kids — like so many others — were schooled without benefit of sanitary, safe, and dignified restrooms.

How many middle or high school students do not use the restroom all day? According to a survey in *USA*

Weekend, at least four out of 10 sixth- to 12th-grade students hold it in all day. *USA Weekend* surveyed 65,193 sixth- to 12th-graders in April 1993 and published the results in a special issue on "Unsafe Schools" (13-15 August 1993). Twenty-eight thousand students (43%) responded that they "avoid school restrooms." Using national figures based on this survey, in a four-year high school with 2,000 students, an estimated 800 students avoid restroom use in that school. What is the health and social cost of that one statistic?

In 1998-99 there were 14,891 school districts with a total of more than 90,000 schools. Assuming 10 restrooms per school, that makes 900,000 restrooms. I estimate at least a fifth (20%) of these restrooms need improvement due to the average age of public schools (42 years), poor upkeep, disrespect, and a host of other factors. In all, we are talking about at least 180,000 unacceptable restrooms.

Most states, districts, and schools have no standards for public school restrooms. Restrooms in or near school kitchens, where staff handles food, generally have regulations from food service and health codes, just as those in restaurants do. Yet I have found only a handful of standards for the upkeep and adequacy of public school restrooms. In Georgia, no restroom standards existed when I began; and I know of only one district working on such standards. That county is developing inspection guidelines for schools constructed since 1996. Generally, student restrooms meet limited building codes, such as number of commodes per child, when they are built.

I have worked in, critiqued, or visited nearly 50 schools in Georgia, Washington, California, New Mexico, Arkansas, Michigan, Illinois, Ohio, New York, Pennsylvania, Florida, Tennessee, and Alabama. School officials from Pennsylvania and Florida have shared copies of state health regulations.

Now, more than a decade later and after five years of effort, I know that children can have a more positive and respectful experience in the student restrooms of our public schools.

There are two lessons I have learned about public school restrooms.

- Only kids use and abuse student restrooms. Students themselves have a major responsibility to respect themselves, others, and property while in restrooms.
- More caring adults — administrators, teachers, custodians, parents, board officials, and vendors, as well as members of the health, recreational, and even the faith community — need to be more involved and to help improve unacceptable restrooms.

Every educator, parent, and citizen should ask: Are the restrooms in my local public school nice or nasty? If they are nice, congratulations. Please share with others how you got them nice. More important, tell other people how you keep them nice. If they are nasty, read on. Nasty public school restrooms send two messages: the school expects little from its students, and the individual students do not respect themselves.

What Is Project CLEAN?

Project CLEAN is an effort to improve the safety, cleanliness, and hygiene of student restrooms in public schools. It stands for "Citizens, Learners, and Educators Against Neglect." A registered service mark contains these words on a blackboard with an upright right hand covered with a cleaning glove.

Project CLEAN is about changing the attitudes and behavior of students and adults. It is not a cleaning company trying for a contract to wash lavatories.

Project CLEAN builds a five-step, school-by-school communication process that includes:

1. Establishing a working relationship with the principal and conducting a site visit.
2. Taking a checklist inventory of restroom conditions.
3. Facilitating student and adult discussion in order to identify solutions to restroom problems.
4. Developing an individualized, written, restroom improvement plan for each school.
5. Helping a school team implement its plan to ensure ongoing improvements in student restrooms.

I believe in school-by-school reform and the individual culture of each building. However, there are many similarities among schools. Whether you believe your school is superior to another or not, no toilet paper is no toilet paper, wherever the school. Do not believe that your school is an exception because you live in a wealthier district. In fact, in a country as affluent as ours, school restrooms are a national disgrace.

Project CLEAN is important because of the deplorable condition and lack of standards in too many students' restrooms in far too many public elementary, middle, and high schools. But Project CLEAN is just one approach. The issue of safe, clean, hygienic student restrooms matters more than any single project. The condition of public school restrooms matters because it affects people personally.

In the mid-1990s I interviewed kids wherever I went and I listened to horror stories about personal, degrading experiences in student restrooms. I also heard from adults who would say, "The issue has been around forever," "We are doing as well as others," and "We have bigger priorities." So the problem has remained recalcitrant.

Consider the words of one of the country's premier superintendents, Thomas W. Payzant of Boston. When confronted in 1999 by a large contingency of students wanting better restroom conditions, he worked with them to make improvements, but only after he fell into the familiar administrative refrain: "This issue [clean restrooms] has been around since I started being a superintendent in the 1960s. It's not just here but every place" (*Furlan* 1999, p. 4).

True, nasty restrooms are surely around in too many places. Review just a few headlines. In 1997 from *USA Today*, "Parents Tell Schools It's Time to Wash Up the Washrooms." Also from 1997, the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, "In the Schools, Dignity Finds a New Measure in the Stalls." In 1998, from the *Orange County Register* in Southern California, " Dirty Bathrooms a School Problem Throughout the State."

Different people view restrooms in different ways. Principals see them as problems. Students see them as free zones or havens from adults. Custodians view them as an endless headache, and teachers see them as places to avoid.

Principals know that restrooms reflect the climate of their particular school. Educators have pointed out that restrooms reflect the effectiveness of discipline. Others go further and say that the grounds and upkeep of buildings are linked to academic achievement of students. And a few educators say you can tell how effective the whole school is by inspecting the restrooms. As one professor reminded me, bathrooms are a small indication of bigger issues, such as violence.

While many people talk about nasty restrooms and local conditions often are discussed in newspapers, the academic literature usually discusses the problem in global terms and abstractions. I wanted to learn how to get and keep soap supplied, stop graffiti, and provide and restock toilet paper. I wanted to act in a focused manner, one restroom at time, and try to change the attitudes and behavior of students who used, abused, and avoided that particular restroom. And as an indepen-

dent educator, I not only wanted educators and students to do more of what they should have done in the first place, but also I wanted to be contracted with and paid to assist them in their responsibilities.

Following my student and adult interviews and an initial, futile literature search in the early Nineties, I realized that students felt the issue was important, adults acknowledged it was an enduring headache, and the popular media typically reported on notorious stories of abusive conditions. So I decided to see about student restrooms for myself.

One fall day I asked the principal of Henderson High in DeKalb County if I could come to his school and learn about restrooms. He assented; and I donned yellow scrub gloves, cleaned toilets and urinals, and mopped floors for hours. I learned how hard the work was and how little the students cared. The next day I visited my handiwork and the johns were as messy as they had been the day before.

I wrote several letters to editors, a few articles, and newsletter stories and delivered some speeches. I tried to grow the ideas and experiences into a project. It was important to thousands of students and many educators, and now it was important to me personally.

One day I hopped a bus and went to a school. Project CLEAN, like any successful project, needed some luck. And luckily, I went to Cross Keys High School, which has about 70 nations represented in its 1,200 student population. The story of my first visit and principal Tim Freeman's openness and actions were recorded in the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* (Cumming 1997). The im-

portance of that visit cannot be overstated. To improve student restrooms, like any other endeavor in public schools, the principal is key. Tim Freeman was then, and remains now, open, supportive, and helpful. He does not become defensive even when things go awry.

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Restroom Issues

When asked about issues associated with public school restrooms, most school administrators, custodians, and students think of the typical problems. Of course, the litany of problems is legion. Yet no matter how long the list, rarely is it all-inclusive. Based on someone's personal experience, another horror story could easily be added.

Marjorie Cresswell Wasleben, past editor of the "School Safety Update," the newsletter of the National School Safety Center, listed a dozen typical problems, from lack of supplies to avoidance of use, from intimidation to violent assaults. She titled a front-page article on Project CLEAN in the December 1998 issue, "School Restrooms Evidence 'Dissing:' Disrespect, Disrepair, Disuse" (Keating 1998, p. 2).

School restroom issues even appeared in fictional form in 1996, when Margaret Yang wrote her first novel, "Locked Out," about a principal who handled smoking in restrooms by locking the restroom doors. A girl in the book tries to change school "policy" and learns about school politics.

This fastback is less about those typical problems and more about changing the attitudes and behaviors that lead to them.

We must change students' attitudes and behaviors so that more students will be respectful users, not abusers, of student restrooms. One way to do this is to teach more students in more grades how respectfully to use and improve the restrooms. Use any lessons, approaches, examples, or pedagogy that works in your school. Then punish any violators — even, on occasion, their peers. Of course, students and parents should pay for any damages they do. However, because we usually do not know or can not catch the culprits, usually nothing is done.

We also must encourage more leadership and involvement from adults, including principals and other administrators, custodians, teachers, support staff, and parents. One way in which to accomplish this is to give them practical assistance to find what has worked at other schools and adapt it for their school. A second way, to be considered when absolutely necessary, is to embarrass the school and district with reports, pictures, and public action, such as the bathroom moms of Berkeley did. These mothers in the Bay Area wrote reports, petitioned the board of education, and held media events on the condition of the bathrooms. As an experienced administrator in DeKalb County admitted, "Three letters from parents will get a principal to move."

Concentrating on upkeep is necessary, but it is an incomplete approach. The custodial staff cannot keep up with the problems if the students and faculty do not

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help. Any solution requires action by a school-based team, and that team should include custodians.

There are three restroom issues that are of most importance:

- Safety: Is each child free from harassment, bullying, fighting, smoking, extortion, and even physical violence?
- Cleanliness: Are the restrooms washed, graffiti removed immediately, and the toilets and sinks cleaned?
- Hygiene: Are there minimum health standards that guarantee supplies, effective water temperature, and privacy?

Student attitudes are an important issue in safe, clean bathrooms. Their attitudes determine their behavior when they are alone or with peers in the restroom. One attitude I have encountered over the years is particularly disconcerting. When I conduct discussions in health classes in middle and high schools, I usually drop a paper towel on the floor and ask the students what each would do if he saw a similar towel on the restroom floor. Without hesitation, some student inevitably blurts out a universal maxim: "My parents pay taxes. It's the janitor's job to pick up the paper." This might be an example of adolescent immaturity, disrespect for property, lack of civic understanding, or just plain ignorance; but it is the prevailing attitude.

In the first national article mentioning my work (Stover 1996) Parisi's Law was coined. Luke Parisi is an experienced principal in Rochester, New York. Parisi's

Law is: "Kids don't flush. They won't flush anyone else's business. By noon toilets are full." His solution was automatic plumbing devices. It worked in his school.

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Taking Responsibility for Restrooms

Students are the main stakeholders in public school restrooms. Four out of 10 middle and high school students avoid restrooms altogether. Others conduct their business with a proper attitude. But a few — just enough to affect everyone — cause mischief when they are in the restroom. Those students who misbehave affect all who come after them.

Students in middle and high school are encouraged or even required to become involved in "community service." Yet rarely are restrooms seen as an important place in which to do a school project on environmental health, water usage, appropriate language, or health.

Teachers also are important stakeholders; or, at least, they should be. For the most part, teachers do not use student restrooms. It demeans them. It is not professional. They want their privacy. As one Chicago teacher told me, no teacher wants his personal sounds made in a restroom heard by some sophomore in his algebra class.

Most teachers do not want to be involved in improving the conditions of restrooms, though the conditions of the restrooms affect the children about whom they supposedly care.

Recently I designed a plan to offer incentives to teachers who would monitor, and perhaps use, student restrooms more frequently. The savings to the school, which would not have to pay for removing graffiti, could go to teachers for supplies and materials. It costs an average of $2 per letter to remove permanent marker and key-scrapped words. Decrease the words, and share the wealth with teachers.

Custodians also have a great interest in the upkeep of school restrooms. But custodians cannot improve student restrooms by themselves. There are too many kids. However, janitorial workers can do more, and they must do things differently.

Custodial workers should be trained to learn the names of students. When students in a large school feel that an adult in the school knows them and cares about them, negative behaviors decrease.

The administrators, teachers and custodians must work together. Custodians who report inappropriate activities, fill out standardized forms, and then complain that teachers don't do their part, are as much a part of the education "blame game" as are teachers who nag about parents and parents who complain about administrators.

The best way to get the custodians more involved is to listen to them, involve and respect them, and then expect them to make some changes. In order to do this, administrators should make a point of meeting with custodians. When they have training, ask to sit in or conduct a session. For example, I exhibited at a health/information fair that involved more than 600 custodi-

ans. To highlight the importance of improved restrooms in an attention-getting way, I walked around for 15 minutes with a toilet seat around my neck and a question written on its lid, "Are your school restrooms nice or nasty?" Many of the custodians laughed, and many discussed issues with me.

More than once I have looked a custodian in the eye, whether he was a union member or not, and have said: "The kid who writes a word on the stall door owns that word. If the word is still up after one day, the janitor owns it. When the word is up longer than two days, the principal owns it." I've not had a caring custodian refute that proposition.

In January of 2001, I toured a high school in central Erie, Pennsylvania, which had 58 restrooms in a three-wing building. A very helpful custodian, who had himself graduated from that same school, and I spent two hours just looking at about 10 locations. Some of the graffiti was dated 1999. Two years! Not two days. That experience reemphasized the critical role of principals as the main stakeholders.

It is hard to overstate the obvious. Little gets done in public schools without the support of the principal. The principal is the main authority in the spaces outside the classroom. In the halls, cafeteria, auditorium, and restrooms, the principal has the say.

Success in any effort to improve restrooms depends on the principal for several reasons.

First the principal must be inviting the change. Once in DeKalb County at Tilson Elementary, a principal who had volunteered to participate in Project CLEAN let me

utter two sentences about the process, then asked me to leave. His reason was, "We don't need this." I left, and the bathrooms remained untouched.

Second, with Project CLEAN, a principal must allow me — an outsider — to be in the school unchaperoned and with the freedom to inspect the restrooms, listen to students, and prod personnel.

Third, when the principal or a designee selects the students for a discussion, that person must decide whether to attend or let me as the facilitator have a free discussion with the students. And after the principal reads the restroom improvement plan, he or she must decide whether to act.

Last, and most important, the principal must assemble a team of committed individuals to improve restrooms on a daily basis.

Graham Green, a retired principal with more than 50 years experience, said that when a principal says his school is no worse than any other or that lavatories have always been a problem, "that principal is the seat of the problem." He recommended that an effective principal had to be walking in the school, including the restrooms. Green was convinced that, though it took longer, the solution was leadership by the principal.

The *San Francisco Chronicle* captured the principal's responsibility when it wrote in 1999:

> Like captains of ships at sea, principals must be held responsible for every detail of their schools, and that includes the proper care and maintenance of bathroom facilities. That means demanding cooperation from parents, teachers, and administrators and particularly

the students who use them. Filthy and unusable rest rooms are a telling symptom. If a principal is failing in such an obvious way, it's a pretty good bet the school is in trouble elsewhere, too."

Without a doubt, another critical part of the solution is the parents. One of the main reasons Project CLEAN distributes a resource guide to parents is that they are central in the mix of stakeholders.

Most parents want safety and a quality education for their kids. Most parents want restrooms to be clean, safe, well-maintained, and hygienic spaces in their child's school. At home, most parents have taught their children to flush, wash, and clean up. However, when adolescents get to middle and high school, the parental influence wanes. Unfortunately, when children reach adolescence, some parents shirk from their role as the primary teacher and feel that it is "the school's job."

Schools must involve parents if the restrooms are going to improve. For example, PTAs, school councils, and school improvement teams could include a sub-committee on "Restrooms." Parents can be part of clean-up campaigns that include painting, decorating, and adopting a restroom. In my experience, parents are generally an untouched resource to improve restrooms.

Educators should not forget to involve community groups and businesses. For example, Kimberly Clark Corporation worked with Project CLEAN to clean and repair restrooms in DeKalb's Avondale High School.

Such community groups as Boys and Girls Clubs, city recreation departments, YMCAs, and Boy and Girl Scouts could do a lot more to affect children's restroom

habits. Good behavior at the Boys Club will be carried over to middle school. Such groups can provide invaluable help to a school. An insightful youth worker in Michigan summed up his philosophy about how he got respect from youngsters around the bathroom issues. He told his charges, "I don't swim in your toilet, and you don't pee in our pool."

County health agencies, especially, should be engaged in improving restrooms. Health departments have a connection to student restrooms. But personnel from these agencies usually walk right past student restrooms as they go into kitchens and inspect the conditions and restrooms of the food-handling employees.

Only a few school districts, and even fewer states, such as Pennsylvania and Florida, have a formalized inspection and reporting procedure that includes student restrooms. In fact, most states have no standards for restrooms except for minimal toilet and sink requirements during the initial construction phase of a school. Efficient circulating of laws, rules, and understandable forms about school restrooms is so rare among educators as to be almost nonexistent.

Builders and architects also are critical, though they obviously are most important when a school is being built. They need to connect efficiency, economy of scale, and the cookie-cutter building pressures from states with the needs of children and school personnel. One consideration is designing a vandal-proof entrance to a restroom.

Local newspapers, radio and television stations, and national media usually jump on the horror stories of

restrooms. Getting them to report about solutions takes some doing. I try to give them straight facts, news, and my concerns, while at the same time respecting their news and deadline requirements.

Even the faith community could be more involved. There are faith-related health programs that address such big issues as AIDS, but the smaller problems need their help as well. Churches could work through youth groups to address issues of respect, civic pride, community, and thoughtfulness toward others in restrooms.

Project CLEAN has worked with administrators, NEA-affiliated organizations and teachers, custodial training programs, PTAs, school councils, and sports teams. Small grants have allowed me to connect with health teachers and independent organizations, student councils, school newspaper staffs, media, superintendents, and school boards. Businesses, elected officials, and especially principals and students have been involved. I've tried to work with anyone who would have me, and even with some who wished I would go away. In the next section, several stories of how I tried to bring Project CLEAN into various schools may give helpful examples and show how the politics of implementation will be part of any effort to improve restrooms.

Implementing Project CLEAN

How can Project CLEAN help improve student restrooms in your school? Before I begin to discuss several approaches, I want to clarify what Project CLEAN is not. It is not a one-size-fits-all approach to a perennial problem, a solution to deeper issues, a way for the originator to get rich, or a cleaning company. Sometimes it is not even successful at getting in the schoolhouse door.

I believe that no single approach at improvement, let alone a novelty such as painting or wallpapering, works all the time. Schools need responsible students who respect the restrooms in their schools no less than, and sometimes more than, in their home.

Project CLEAN does not fix bathrooms. Its purpose is to educate and assist educators, not to do the work of the principal, students, teachers, or custodians. Making a school's restrooms safe and clean requires time, energy, and money. Unfortunately, too many administrators want a quick, no-cost solution to a 30-year problem.

Project CLEAN helps each school go through a five-step process. As coordinator, I try to:

1. Get to know the principal;

2. Investigate the restrooms;
3. Help students and school staff find solutions to restroom problems;
4. Write a two-page restroom improvement plan;
5. Make resources and myself available to help implement the plan.

Each school is unique, but all schools also have similarities to other schools. Project CLEAN is an approach tailored for each school, based on what each school is willing to do. However, success in downtown Dubuque does not mean it can be redone in Buffalo. There is no cookbook method for reform. Nevertheless, an elementary school's method of dispensing soap to fifth-graders in Valdosta, Georgia, has some lessons for a school in rural Idaho.

One perennial problem is that many educators believe they can solve the problem of despicable restrooms without any help from outside the school. Frequently what they learn is that after several years of haphazard efforts, the problem remains.

Schools need to form a coordinated plan to improve their restrooms. That plan should involve all of the stakeholders mentioned in the previous section. In addition, the school must make clean and safe restrooms a matter of official school policy.

The Security Committee of the DeKalb School System in Georgia, for example, adopted a seven-item agenda for improving school restrooms. Perhaps the most significant recommendation was an addition to the Student Code of Conduct:

> All offenses enumerated in this Student Code of Conduct apply to student behavior in school restrooms and locker rooms. Students are expected to help keep restrooms clean and safe. Also, students are expected to report disruptive, unsafe, and / or unclean conditions in restrooms to an administrator or other staff members.

Those historic sentences, which have the effect of policy, are significant because they establish a standard of expected conduct.

To get the job done, schools need resources. And resources mean people, money, materials, and support. What are the means you have at hand? Try to find two other people in order to have a three-person team. If possible, have both women and men on the team, which makes bathroom inspections more practical. This gender balance is not absolutely necessary, as evidenced by the mothers in Berkeley and by my own work. Interested teachers, parents, mature students, and community members are good resources.

The PTA, PTSA, school council, or school improvement team already may have a building and grounds committee, but you can form a subcommittee on restrooms. Try to have a manageable number on the subcommittee — maybe two students, a custodian, one or two faculty members, and a couple of parents.

The team's first step is to do an inventory of between four and eight restrooms. For this, the team should develop a checklist. Checklists may be as basic as ranking such items as cleanliness, supplies, odor, lighting, and structural condition on a scale of "good," "fair," and "poor." The one used by Project CLEAN is four pages.

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After the inventory of current conditions, write out a limited goal, such as regular stocking of towels, toilet paper, and soap.

Cross Keys High School in DeKalb kept a "Bathroom Incident Log" for four semesters. The data was collected by restroom location, type of incident, date, and sex, for example, "Third Hall, M [Men] had four incidents of cigarette smoking in four weeks." What happens to this data is up to administrators. The mere fact that it was collected and recorded for four semesters was an accomplishment.

A more ambitious activity is to organize a school club to clean, paint, and decorate the restrooms. In other words, adopt a restroom. Then be very sure to have some ongoing structure and resources to keep the improved restrooms nice.

A second resource is money. Improvements and new materials can be costly, but funds can be found in a number of ways. PTAs can include restroom improvements in their budgets, or students can hold a fundraiser. Accounts in the local school system's general and special funds can be directed or redirected to better restroom upkeep and more supplies. Public dollars have been available from federal sources, especially education and security block grants.

Project CLEAN first was funded by a federal block grant for local law enforcement. Later I found some local assistance grants provided by the state legislature, and I raised modest amounts from writing and speaking about the issue. A major international company, the Kimberly Clark Corporation, is helping on at least one

school project through a partnership with Project CLEAN. Local business partners also can be a source of financial assistance.

Schools spend money for removing graffiti. Once the project shows some success, the schools should take some of the money they save on graffiti removal and apply it to help improve restroom conditions.

Money will be needed for supplies, printing articles to increase awareness, designing logos to spruce up the restrooms, taking and developing pictures. I have used money to produce resource guides in English and Spanish, which help students, parents, and custodians improve restrooms. These guides and a communication sticker, which can be put in a restroom or on the bumper of a vehicle, also help connect students with a project. Whatever helps to increase awareness about the issues and gets students and adults to change their attitudes is a legitimate cost.

Another resource is literature about the issue. Ideas and even contacts come from reading. For example, Susan Ohanian's delightful article, "The Paper Chase," was about fighting for decent working conditions, including toilet paper, for teachers. She accurately portrayed real problems in a multimillion-dollar school, which could serve as a warning for any district.

Earlier I noted the dearth of materials I found in the mid-1990s. Search the Web now, under "school restrooms," and you may be overwhelmed. Thus another resource comes from items found on the Internet.

In the end, the most important resource is you. Whether you are a teacher, custodian, parent, commu-

nity member, student, or administrator, your energy and persistence are the key resources. You can advocate, speak out, and get involved. This fastback is your call to action.

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